THE BAPTISMAL COVENANT I

Back to Book of Worship >>

HOLY BAPTISM
CONFIRMATION
REAFFIRMATION OF FAITH
RECEPTION INTO THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
RECEPTION INTO A LOCAL CONGREGATION

To make it easier to determine which parts of the service to use on any given occasion, this service is divided into the following sections:

1) Introduction to Baptism
2) Introduction to Confirmation and Reaffirmation
3) Presentation of Candidates
4) Renunciation of Sin and Profession of Faith
5) Parents' and Sponsors' Vow to Nurture the Child
6) Vows by Candidates Able to Speak for Themselves
7) Vows by Sponsors of Candidates
8) Congregation's Vows
9) The Apostles' Creed
10) Thanksgiving over the Water
11) Baptism with Laying on of Hands
12) Confirmation or Reaffirmation of Faith
13) Congregational Reaffirmation of the Baptismal Covenant
14) Reception into The United Methodist Church
15) Reception into the Local Congregation
16) Commendation and Welcome

Sections 14, 15 and 16 include the new language adopted by the 2008 General Conference.

At every occasion of baptism or first public profession of faith (confirmation), sponsors should be present and the congregation should reaffirm the baptismal covenant.

If there are no confirmations or reaffirmations of faith or receptions by transfer, and if the only persons being baptized are (1) children who cannot take their own vows or (2) youth or adults who have not reached the developmental stage of making such commitments themselves, Baptismal Covenant II should be used.

If there are only confirmations or public professions of faith and no baptisms, section 11 is omitted.

Each candidate receives either Baptism with Laying on of Hands (section 11) or Confirmation (section 12), but not both.
*If persons are transferring their **professing** membership from another United Methodist congregation, sections 5, 11 and 14 are omitted. Section 7 is used when there are sponsors. Sections 10 and 12 may also be omitted.*
*If persons are being received from another denomination into **professing** membership in a local congregation, only sections 5 and 11 are omitted.*
*If persons are being received into **baptized but not professing** membership in a local congregation, only sections 14–16 are used for those coming from another denomination, and only sections 15–16 are used for those transferring their baptized membership from another United Methodist congregation.*
If the whole congregation is reaffirming the Baptismal Covenant, and there are no individuals to be baptized, confirmed, or received into membership, Baptismal Covenant IV should be used.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SERVICE

As persons come forward, an appropriate baptismal or confirmation hymn may be sung.

1 *A deacon or pastor addresses the congregation:*
Brothers and sisters in Christ:
Through the Sacrament of Baptism
we are initiated into Christ's holy Church.
We are incorporated into God's mighty acts of salvation
and given new birth through water and the Spirit.
All this is God's gift, offered to us without price.

2 *If there are confirmations or reaffirmations, the pastor continues:*
Through confirmation,
and through the reaffirmation of our faith,
we renew the covenant declared at our baptism,
acknowledge what God is doing for us,and affirm our commitment to Christ's holy Church.

PRESENTATION OF CANDIDATES

3 *A representative of the congregation presents the candidates with the appropriate statements:*
I present *Name(s)* for baptism.
I present *Name(s)* for confirmation.
I present *Name(s)* to reaffirm their faith.

I present *Name(s)* who come(s) seeking baptized membership from the _____ Church.
I present *Name(s)* who come(s) seeking professing membership from the ——— Church.
If desired, Thanksgiving over the Water (section 10) may precede the Renunciation of Sin and Profession of Faith.
At this or some later point in the service, persons may add to their vows a personal witness to their Christian faith and experience.
RENUNCIATION OF SIN AND PROFESSION OF FAITH
4 *Since the earliest times, the vows of Christian baptism have consisted first of the renunciation of all that is evil and then the profession of faith and loyalty to Christ. Parents or other sponsors reaffirm these vows for themselves while taking the responsibilities of sponsorship. Candidates for confirmation profess for themselves the solemn vows that were made at their baptism.*
The pastor addresses parents or other sponsors and those candidates who can answer for themselves:
On behalf of the whole Church, I ask you:
Do you renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness,
reject the evil powers of this world,
and repent of your sin?

I do.
Do you accept the freedom and power God gives you
to resist evil, injustice, and oppression
in whatever forms they present themselves?

I do.
Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Savior,
put your whole trust in his grace,
and promise to serve him as your Lord,

in union with the Church which Christ has opened
to people of all ages, nations, and races?

I do.
5 *The pastor addresses parents or other sponsors of candidates not able to answer for themselves:*

Will you nurture these children (persons)
in Christ's holy Church,
that by your teaching and example they may be guided
to accept God's grace for themselves,
to profess their faith openly,
and to lead a Christian life?

I will.

6 *The pastor addresses candidates who can answer for themselves:*
According to the grace given to you,
will you remain faithful members of Christ's holy Church
and serve as Christ's representatives in the world?

I will.

7 *The pastor addresses the sponsors:*
Will you who sponsor these candidates
support and encourage them in their Christian life?

I will.

8 *The pastor addresses the congregation, and the congregation responds:*
Do you, as Christ's body, the Church,
reaffirm both your rejection of sin
and your commitment to Christ?

We do.

Will you nurture one another in the Christian faith and life
and include these persons now before you in your care?
With God's help we will proclaim the good news
and live according to the example of Christ.
We will surround these persons
with a community of love and forgiveness,
that they may grow in their trust of God,
and be found faithful in their service to others.
We will pray for them,
that they may be true disciples
who walk in the way that leads to life.

9 *The Apostles' Creed in threefold question-and-answer form appeared at least as early as the third century as a statement of faith used in baptisms and*

has been widely used in baptisms ever since. The candidate(s), sponsor(s), and local congregation join with the universal Church across the ages in this historic affirmation of the Christian faith.
A deacon or pastor addresses all, and the congregation joins the candidates and their parents and sponsors in responding:
Let us join together in professing the Christian faith
as contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

Do you believe in God the Father?
I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
Do you believe in Jesus Christ?
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
[who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and will come again to judge the living and the dead.]
Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
[the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.]
THANKSGIVING OVER THE WATER
10 *A deacon or lay leader may pour water for baptism and reaffirmation into the font at this time in such a way that the congregation can see and hear the water.*
This prayer is led by the pastor and joined by the people. It recalls scriptural images and meanings of Holy Baptism and is comparable to the Great Thanksgiving at Holy Communion. All may stand.
The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Let us pray.
The pastor may raise hands in the ancient Christian posture of prayer, and invite the congregation to do likewise.
Eternal Father:
When nothing existed but chaos,
you swept across the dark waters
and brought forth light.
In the days of Noah
you saved those on the ark through water.
After the flood you set in the clouds a rainbow.
When you saw your people as slaves in Egypt,
you led them to freedom through the sea.
Their children you brought through the Jordan
to the land which you promised.

****Sing to the Lord, all the earth.**
Tell of God's mercy each day.
In the fullness of time you sent Jesus,
nurtured in the water of a womb.
He was baptized by John and anointed by your Spirit.
He called his disciples
to share in the baptism of his death and resurrection
and to make disciples of all nations.

****Declare Christ's works to the nations,**
his glory among all the people.
The pastor may place hands in or over the water, stir the water, or lift the water.
Pour out your Holy Spirit,
to bless this gift of water and those who receive it,
to wash away their sin
and clothe them in righteousness
throughout their lives,
that, dying and being raised with Christ,
they may share in his final victory.

****All praise to you, Eternal Father,**
through your Son Jesus Christ,

who with you and the Holy Spirit
lives and reigns for ever. Amen.
BAPTISM WITH LAYING ON OF HANDS
11 *In all services of the baptismal covenant, water should be used generously as a living sign of the abundance of God's grace, cleansing, and life-giving power.*
Each candidate is baptized and receives the laying on of hands individually. The pastor uses the first (Christian) name(s), but not the family name:
Christian Name(s), I baptize you in the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**
Immediately after the administration of the water, the pastor places hands on the candidate's head and invokes the work of the Holy Spirit. Persons nearby, including baptized members of the candidate's family, may join the pastor in this action. Others present may join by extending their hands toward the candidate. All say the Amen.
Pastor, laying hand on the newly baptized:
The Holy Spirit work within you,
that being born through water and the Spirit,
you may be a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ. **Amen.**
One or more of the following acts may be added at this time:
a) The pastor may trace on the forehead of each newly baptized person the sign of the cross in silence or with the words: "Name, child of God, you are sealed by the Holy Spirit in baptism and marked as Christ's own forever." Olive oil may be used in this action, following the biblical custom anointing prophets (1 Kings 19:16), priests (Exodus 29:7), and kings (1 Kings 1:39). Jesus' titles Christ and Messiah both mean "Anointed One," and the New Testament repeatedly calls Christ our High Priest and King. Christians in baptism become members of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13), which is a "royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9). Anointing at baptism is a reminder that all Christians are anointed into this royal priesthood.
b) New clothing is sometimes presented to those just baptized, particularly in the case of infants, as a symbol that we "have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27) as one would put on new clothing. Such clothing is traditionally white, suggesting the "white robes" in Revelation 7:9 –14. Words such as these may be used: "Receive these new clothes as a token of the new life that is given in Christ Jesus."
c) A lighted baptismal candle may be presented to the newly baptized, with such words as: "Let your light so shine that others, seeing your good works,

may glorify your Father in heaven." The candle may be presented to the parents or sponsors of baptized children, in which case "others" may be changed to "this child" or "these children." It is appropriate to light the baptismal candle in the home each year on the anniversary of baptism as a reminder of the grace of God offered through baptism. A baptismal candle bears either a Christian symbol or no decoration at all; it should not be confused with ornate birthday candles sold commercially to mark a child's birthdays. The candle may be lighted from the paschal candle or from one of the candles on or near the Lord's table.
d) A certificate of baptism may be presented to the newly baptized. If the certificate is not given at this time, the pastor should ensure the candidate or family receive it promptly.
When all candidates have been baptized, the pastor invites the congregation to welcome them:
Now it is our joy to welcome
our new sisters and brothers in Christ.

Through baptism
you are incorporated by the Holy Spirit
into God's new creation
and made to share in Christ's royal priesthood.
We are all one in Christ Jesus.
With joy and thanksgiving we welcome you
as members of the family of Christ.
CONFIRMATION OR REAFFIRMATION OF FAITH
12 *Acts of confirmation or reaffirmation of faith are not acts of rebaptism.*
>Here water may be used by the candidates as the pastor says:
Remember your baptism and be thankful. **Amen**.
In services of the baptismal covenant, water should be used generously as a sign of the abundance of God's grace, cleansing, life-giving and life-renewing power. Appropriate ways persons being confirmed or reaffirming their faith may use the water include the following:
a) They may touch the water and make the sign of the cross on their own foreheads.
b) They may scoop up the water and let it fall back into the font.
c) They may use it on their heads, or hands, or to refresh their faces.
As the pastor, and others if desired, place hands on the head of each person being confirmed or reaffirming faith, the pastor says to each:

Name, the Holy Spirit work within you,
that having been born through water and the Spirit,
you may live as a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ. **Amen.**
13 *Acts of reaffirmation are not acts of rebaptism. When there is a congregational reaffirmation of the Baptismal Covenant, the congregation may be invited to use or receive the water as or after the pastor says:*
Remember your baptism and be thankful. **Amen**.
Appropriate ways persons may use the water include:
a) Touching the water and making the sign of the cross on their own foreheads;
b) Scooping up the water and letting it fall back into the font;
c) Scooping it over their heads, or hands, or to refresh their faces. <
d) Or, a deacon, the pastor, or other assistants may use an asperges, evergreen branch or other means to sprinkle small amounts of water toward the congregation. This parallels sprinkling with hyssop for purification (Exodus 12:22 ; Psalm 51:7) and sprinkling as a sign of renewal (Ezekiel 36:25 –26).
RECEPTION INTO THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
14 *If there are persons coming into baptized or professing membership in The United Methodist Church from other denominations who have not yet been presented, they may be presented at this time.*
The pastor addresses all those transferring their baptized or professing membership into The United Methodist Church, together with those who, through baptism or confirmation, have just professed their own faith:
As members of Christ's universal Church,
will you be loyal to Christ through The United Methodist Church,
and do all in your power to strengthen its ministries?

I will.
RECEPTION INTO THE LOCAL CONGREGATION
15 *If there are persons joining this congregation as baptized or professing members from other United Methodist congregations who have not yet been presented, they may be presented at this time.*
The pastor addresses all those transferring baptized or professing membership into the congregation, together with those who, through baptism or confirmation, have just professed their own faith:
As members of this congregation,
will you faithfully participate in its ministries
by your prayers, your presence,

your gifts, your service
and your witness?

I will.

COMMENDATION AND WELCOME

16 *The pastor addresses the congregation:*
Members of the household of God,
I commend these persons to your love and care.
Do all in your power to increase their faith,
confirm their hope, and perfect them in love.

The congregation responds:
We give thanks for all that God has already given you
and we welcome you in Christian love.
As members together with you
in the body of Christ
and in this congregation
of The United Methodist Church,
we renew our covenant
faithfully to participate
in the ministries of the Church
by our prayers, our presence,
our gifts, our service, and our witness,
that in everything God may be glorified
through Jesus Christ.
The pastor addresses those baptized, confirmed, or received, using an appropriate gesture of blessing:
The God of all grace,
who has called us to eternal glory in Christ,
establish you and strengthen you
that you may live in grace and peace.

One or more laypersons, including children, may join the pastor in acts of welcome and peace. Baptized children may be welcomed by a kiss of peace or other acts or words immediately following Baptism with Laying on of Hands. An appropriate hymn, stanza, or response may be sung.
The service continues with prayers including appropriate thanksgivings and intercessions for those who have participated in these acts.

Services of the baptismal covenant most appropriately lead into the celebration of Holy Communion, in which the union of the new members with the body of Christ is most fully expressed. The new members, including children, may bring the bread and wine to the Lord's table, receive first, and assist in serving.